"Living, Loving, Lasting Union"

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FUNERAL ADDRESS

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE FUNERAL OF MR. WILLIAM OLNEY, OCTOBER 22, 1890.

"For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Ephesians 5:30.

BEFORE the funeral, at Norwood Cemetery, of the late Mr. William Olney, senior deacon of the Church at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, a service was held in the Tabernacle. The building was crowded with sympathizing friends who came to testify the affection they bore to the beloved deacon who had been so suddenly called from their midst. The senior Pastor presided. The hymn, "They are gathering homeward one by one," was sung, and Pastor James A. Spurgeon offered prayer.

The hymn "Why do we mourn departing friends?" followed, and C.H. Spurgeon then read and expounded 1 Corinthians 15. The Reverend Burman Cassin, Rector of St. George's, Southwark, briefly engaged in prayer, and the assembly sang the 34th Psalm, in the version beginning—

"Through all the changing scenes of life,
In trouble and in joy,
The praises of my God shall still
My heart and tongue employ."

The hymn commencing, "Forever with the Lord!" was sung, and a concluding prayer was offered by Mr. James Spurgeon.

Pastor C.H. Spurgeon then rose and said—As I am in a very unfit condition to speak to you this morning, I shall try for once to keep away from my subject, for if I dwell upon it, it will master me, and I shall not be able to speak to you at all. I am trying to suppress my feelings, that I may be able to find words.

I am going to speak about the favorite expression of my Brother, William Olney, which he frequently used in prayer. I wonder whether you will agree with me as to what it was? As my memory serves me, I have heard him a score of times, at least, use the following sentence when he drew very near to the Lord, his God, in prayer. He said, "Lord Jesus, we are one with You. We feel that we have a living, loving, lasting union with You." I think that you must remember that gem of his. Those three words have stuck by me and ever since he has gone, I have found myself repeating them to myself quite involuntarily—"a living, loving, lasting union." He owed everything to that. He consciously enjoyed a living, loving, lasting union with the Lord Jesus Christ, and if you and I have that, we have all that we need for time and for eternity! If we have it not, we have nothing. Take anyone of us by himself,

alone, he is lost, ruined, and undone. Take that same person linked with Christ by a living, loving, lasting union and he is a saint—saved, sanctified and sure to be glorified!

I have taken for my text the words which occur in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, the 13th verse. Concerning our Lord Jesus, the Apostle Paul says, We are members of His body, of His faith, and of His bones."

"We," that is, His believing people, "are members of His body, and of His flesh, and of His bones." He is our Head and we are the members of the body—and so we are joined to Him by a living, loving, lasting union.

I am not going beyond those three words—they shall be my three points, but, at the same time, I will keep to my

text.

I. BETWEEN THE BELIEVER AND CHRIST THERE IS A LIVING UNION. There was just that between my Brother, William Olney and his Lord. A living union! When he joined the Church of Christ, he did not offer it the distin-

guished honor of his name and then slip away and give his life to politics, or to business, or to amusement. But when the Church has his name on its roll, it receive the whole of the man—body, soul, and spirit—and this because there was life in him!

His union to Christ was not nominal, but actual. He was not merely covered with the Christian name, but he had the Christian spirit and the Christian life within him. Yes, his union to Christ was a living union—not merely that of reliance, by which the stone leans upon the foundation—though he had that, for never man understood more clearly the doctrine of faith in Christ. Christ was his only trust and confidence and he came to Him as the stones come home to the foundation stone. But it was a living union in his case, for the fruits of life were produced. It was the union of the branch to the stem in that blessed Vine which is Christ, Himself, even as He says, "I am the Vine, you are the branches."

Now what does this living union to Christ mean?

It means, first of all, Christ's life laying hold of us. "For as the Father has life in Himself; so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself." He is full of life and when He takes hold of us and raises our life into His, there is truly a living union between Him and us.

But, further, this living union is Christ's life in us. It is given to Him, not only to take us in our feebleness, but it is His Divine prerogative to impart life to us and to call dead men—and to make them live. "For as the Father raises up the dead, and quickens them; even so the Son quickens whom He wills." This is how we come to have life in connection with Him. His life flows into us, as out of the tree into the branches, so that we can truly say, with the Apostle, "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith to the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." The living union begins with our Lord's life and then that life flows into us and we, also, begin to live.

It was so with our friend, whom we so sadly miss from our midst today. A new life, a life of holiness, a life of service, a life of communion with God began in him by oneness with Christ—and it was continued in him by the same means. There was a living union—the life of Christ had begotten life in him—and this was seen continually in the fruit that he bore. I should not know, if I had to describe my departed Brother, which word to associate more fully with him—"life," or, "love." He was as full of life as ever he could be. He used to amaze me by his energy—I mean not merely physical or even mental energy, but his never-ceasing, overflowing spiritual energy! If any of us were dull, he never was, and he would not let us be dull for long. He would often tell us, when we were not well, that he thought we looked amazingly well and he would try to cheer us up somehow or other, for he, himself, never seemed to lack for life, or fire, or force. I might almost say that, up to the last moment, he was energetic—he died full of life! He was intense in the very highest degree until struck down—and he was thus intense, not because of mere mental activity, but because of the burning zeal for God that was in his soul—and this zeal was the result of his living union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because of this life of Christ which was in him, he bore suffering without flinching. If there was anything that could equal the industry of his work, it was the heroism of his patience. He has often amazed us by his fortitude. We have admired the way in which he has triumphed in Christ in spite of his sufferings, but we have felt that we could scarcely hope to imitate him to the letter. He went as far in the way of bearing pain with patience as he went in the direction of serving Christ with enthusiasm—and this is saying a very great deal for any man. Therefore I do not say it for the man, but in praise of the Grace of God which helped him, whether he was active or passive, to still be buoyant and bright because of the living union which subsisted between him and Christ! A verse of the Psalms we have just sung, which was a great favorite of his, truly describes the resolution of his life—

"Of His deliverance I will boast,
Till all that are distressed,
From my example comfort take,
And charm their griefs to rest." Christ dwelling in him in fullness could both work and suffer. The fact that Christ lives in the Believer is as real as that He once lived on earth in a human body. He came, then, with a double-handed blessing. He came both to do His Father's will and to bear the burden of the souls of men. He was active in doing good and, when the appointed time came, He as willingly bore the burden of the sins of men and suffered to the death without complaint. In like manner Christ lived in our dear friend, making him strong both to do and to suffer. God grant to you and to me, also, to have such a living union to Christ!

Do you know anything of this experience, my dear Friends? Many of you do—it is your life to be one with Christ. But to some of you I must be talking an unmeaning jargon. O

Souls, if the life of Christ is not in you, you are dead while you live, and you will die forever when you die! Unless you get linked to Christ, you will be driven from the Presence of God and away from all that makes true life and joy. Lay hold on Christ, and you will "lay hold on eternal life," for He is "that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." Living contact with Him is our only hope, either for the present or for the future. If you are vitally joined to Christ, it is well with your soul—but if you are divided from Immanuel and have no living union to Christ, there is no eternal life for you! "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him."—

"Living or dying, Lord,
I ask but to be Thine,
My life in You, Your life in me,
Makes Heaven forever mine."

II. The next word to, "living," in my dear Brother's frequent use, was, "loving." BETWEEN THE TRUE BELIEVER AND CHRIST THERE IS A LOVING UNION. And oh, the union of a soul to Christ is made so sweet because it is as loving as it is living! My Brother-in-Christ, William Olney, truly loved! He seemed to have a love to everybody. He was never so pleased as when he was pleasing other people and he would go a long way, sometimes, to try and please people who would not be pleased. But still, his great ambition in life was to love others and to make others love Christ. Love ruled supreme in his actions. His union to Christ was not cold and formal, stiff and narrow—he had a union to Christ that was warm, human, intense, fervent, loving! There was fire in that man and the fire was the ardent flame of great affection to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I would like to have a talk about this loving union to Christ on some other occasion, when I could trust myself more than I can do now at this very solemn service. [On the following evening, Thursday, October 23, 1890, Mr. Spurgeon preached on this subject. The discourse, entitled "Members of Christ" (No. 2244), delivered on that occasion, was published last week. (Footnote).—EOD] Still, there are a few things that may be said upon this subject even now.

Christ's love to us begins this loving union. Its source is not in ourselves, but in love eternal, love immeasurable, love which caused itself—Free-Grace love, love to the unworthy, love to enemies, love to those who had no life, no strength, and no hope apart from Him. Christ loved us so that He deigned to join Himself to us in eternal union. The great Artesian well from which we drink and which has tapped the Divine fountains is the Love of Christ! This is where all our hope, our joy and our love begin. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us." In connection with this same Truth of God of union with Christ and fruit-bearing as the result of it, our Lord, Himself, says, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." When this Love thus made choice of us, He entered into Covenant with

His Father concerning His people—and before we were born He identified Himself with us, so that in the purpose of God from all eternity we were accepted in Him!

But union with us meant union with our sins, and though the Son of God could never be overcome of evil, or become a sharer in human guilt, yet by the blessed mystery of His unity with His people, He could take their sin upon Himself and bear it in His own body on the Cross. Thus, as there is no past or future to the eyes of Him before whom all events are spread out in one eternal, "now," the Son of God was able to atone for the iniquities of those who, through all the ages, would be truly joined to Him. His love that chose us did not shrink back from the awful payment which our debt rendered necessary—it was stronger than death, and mightier than the grave. Many waters could not quench it! Many floods could not drown it, nor will it cease to exert its blessed influence over us until it shall bring us Home to the mansions above! But not even then, for Christ's love is everlasting! By this loving union Christ brings us safely through all the temptations of life. The ransomed spirits of such as are joined to Him are taken to be with Christ the instant they are absent from the body. And, at last, out of the tomb that same Love shall call the body and on the glad day of Resurrection it shall be clearly seen how wonderful is the love which made our Lord so one with us!

This, then, is the way in which we came to a loving union with Christ—He began to love us with a love that had no beginning, which has no measure and which shall know no change nor end—and, therefore He united Himself to us forever. Well might Kent praise the name of the Lord for the wonders worked by such love as this as he sang—

"Heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus, Long ere time its race begun!

To His name eternal praises! Oh! What wonders love has done! One with Jesus By eternal union one."

Our love to Christ completes this loving union. We first learn of His love to us and then, as the result of that, we are brought to love Him. Ours is a poor little love, not worthy of His acceptance, but, such as it is, we give it all to Him and He will not refuse it, or despise it! Oh, that we all might now be joined to Christ in love! I am sure that my Brother, who has gone from us, knew this union more than most of us. When we once got upon this glorious theme in private conversation, or when he touched upon it, himself, in his own public prayers, how His spirit seemed to burn and glow! He was always at home when speaking of the love of Christ, or of the love of Christ's people to their Lord. He could truly say, as I trust many of us will truly say now—

"I give my heart to You,

Jesus, most desired!

And heart for heart the gift shall be, For You my soul has fired. You, hearts alone would move, You, only, hearts do love;

1 would love You as You love me, O Jesus most desired!

In this loving union, Christ's love to us and our love to Christ flow in the same channel. Together they make a stream of love of a glorious kind. We love one another for Christ's sake! Se love sinners for Christ's sake! We love the Truth of God as Christ loves the Truth of God! We love the Father in the same manner that Christ loves the Father, though not to the same degree. There is, in fact, but one love in the Head and in all the members. What the Head loves, all the body loves! As one man we go with Christ. Being united to Him, His desires and longings become our desires and longings— we grow into His likeness and, "are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Do you know anything about loving union to Christ? I feel sure that the great mass of those assembled here both know it and rejoice in it. Oh, to know it more! Oh, that His love were shed abroad more richly in our hearts! Now, by the Holy Spirit that is given to us, may we experience not only the tiny rivulets of love that some of us have had in the past days, but may we get to the torrents of love! May we be swept away by it, till, like a mighty ocean, it covers all our nature and becomes to us a very Heaven begun below!

III. Our third point is that BETWEEN THE TRUE BELIEVERS AND CHRIST THERE IS A LASTING UNION. The whole phrase which our dear departed friend used so frequently was, "living, loving, lasting union." O Friends, what a sad thing it would be for anyone to have only a temporary union with Christ! If I am speaking to any who were members of this Church years ago, but who are not even professors now—if I am addressing some who seemed to be earnest Christians once, but who have gone back from following Christ—I would earnestly remind you that no union with Christ is living and loving unless it is also lasting!

The man who is truly united to Christ does not become apostate. It is all in vain to seem to put on Christ for a time and then, after a little while, to put Him off again. That is the religion of the hypocrite, or of the merely temporary professor. But not so was it with our dear Brother who is sleeping yonder. When he joined the Church—I think that it is rather more than 54 years ago—he gave himself to the Lord and he has been kept and sustained and upheld until now. Why, there are some of you who have been members of four or five denominations during that time! You have changed your views with the varying seasons and have altered more often than we care to remember—while here he was—staying steadfast and immovable all the time, remaining a member of the same Church and going on steadily with his work.

It seems to me that some of you build for a year and pull down, then build again, and pull down once more. Why, you are not building at all unless your building stands! And you are not truly in union with Christ unless the union is a lasting union! And it will not be unless it is a living union! Your profession of Christ will be a lie and will help to sink you lower than the lowest Hell unless you endure to the end! Make sure work with what you do in religion. Do not play at being a Christian. If you are converted, be converted with your

whole heart. If you have faith in Christ, have vital faith, or do not pretend to have any. Be real—be true to the core! Be satisfied with nothing short of that union which the

Spirit of God works in the hearts of those who, without reserve, yield to His power. Otherwise that which you seem to have will not be a lasting thing with you and, at the end, you will be utterly cast off.

Now think of the joy of this fact. Our union with Christ is not only lasting, it is everlasting. With great boldness we utter the challenge, "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" It is true that we hold Christ and that we will hold Him still tighter, but the greater mercy is that He holds us and He will never let us go! Does He not say, concerning His sheep, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand"? And will He not be true to His word? You may take Christ from our hand, but you cannot take us from Christ's hand! He holds us fast. He is married to us and He, Himself, declares, "The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away." He will have no divorce between our soul and Himself. This living, loving, lasting union, which we have already found to be such a glorious reality, is to last forever and ever, blessed be the name of the

Lord!

I want you, beloved Friends, to draw much comfort from this Truth of God and then I will be finished. Christ will not lose His members. My head would not willingly lose a little finger and Christ our Head will not lose one of us if "we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Do you think that Christ can be mutilated? Do you think that He will lose even the least joint of the least finger? Never shall that be true! The word written of His body of flesh is equally true concerning His mystical body, which is His Church. "A bone of Him shall not be broken." Not even the smallest and most insignificant Believer in Christ shall be lost, otherwise would His body be incomplete. He is a perfect Christ and you that are members of His body shall never be cut away from His by the wounds of Satan's sword, the surgery of infidelity, or any earthly accident or diabolical temptation. If you are one with Him, you will be one with Him forever, for the union between you and your Lord is an eternal union—to break it would be to disfigure and mutilate the Christ of God!

Furthermore, in that we are one with Christ, He will raise our bodies. "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" and, though I do not insist upon it, this verse has, to me, a kind of ring about it which would lead us to believe that if we are members of His body, He will take even our bodies to be members of Himself. Christ will not leave our Brother in the grave. His body will see corruption, but the tomb shall only be like a refining pot to separate the precious from the vile. When Moses brought Israel out of Egypt, he said, "There shall not a hoof be left behind," and when that One who is greater than Moses shall bring forth His people from their graves, there shall not a bone or a piece of a bone of His redeemed be left in the region of death! When the angel brought Peter out of prison, he told

him to put his shoes on. "Bind on your sandals," was the angelic direction. He would not leave even an old pair of slippers in the prison when he brought Peter out! The deliverance was to be absolutely complete. Thus, too, when Christ shall bid us put on our garments which He shall prepare for us in the Resurrection, no integral part of the man shall be left behind. O Grave, you must give up your prey! O Death, you must yield up your spoils! Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, they, as well as our souls, must be set free from the power of the last enemy. "Therefore comfort one another with these words," whether it is concerning your own death, or the death of this dear Friend on whose coffin we look just now.

Beloved, we are parting with our Brother, William Olney, for a while, but we shall meet again. We are so one with each other in truth and experience that we cannot be separated! He was a member of Christ's body and of His flesh and of His bones—so am I and so are you, my fellow Believer! The members of one body must be one. And we shall meet our departed friend, again, before long. Perhaps in another week some of us may see his face. I wonder what he has been doing already in that land of light and liberty! Mr. Fullerton writes me saying that he would not wonder if he spent last Sunday telling the spirits above how he had spent the previous Sunday and making them all wonder at what the Grace of God had done among poor sinners down here on earth. He could tell the tale of Haddon Hall and of this Tabernacle, recounting the story of what the Lord has done in saving men and women—and I do not think the angels and the redeemed could be better occupied than in hearing what the Lord has been doing in His new creation here below!

Very probably the conjecture is right, for the Grace of God reaches us "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." When they hear the story yonder, they will take down their harps and raise new hallelujahs to God and to the Lamb! Think not that I talk

strangely. The angels rejoice over one sinner that repents and they will yet more rejoice when one messenger, newly come from the midst to God's salvation work, shall tell them of scores that have been brought to the Savior's feet!

Beloved Friends, eternity is ours, and a joyous eternity it will be to those who are one with Jesus Christ, in "living, loving, lasting union." We shall soon ascend to "the realms of the blest." There is a ladder waiting for us to climb and when we mount it, we shall have no reason to mourn. It is but for a little time that we shall have to keep the night-watches. The watchman of the night cries, "The morning comes!" The night of weeping will soon be past. "Until the day beaks, and the shadows flee away," be of good courage. Patiently hope, "and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." He will surely come again and even the tears of today shall abundantly be recompensed to you.

I pray that every blessing may rest upon every mourner this day. Indeed, dear Friends, while we mourn with you, we cannot but congratulate you that you have had such a husband,

such a father, such a brother as our friend who is now taken home. I will not say that you have lost him, for that would not be true. God lent him to you for a long time and now He has taken him back!

I think that it is about 15 years ago since, in the ordinary course of things, he might have been expected to have died. At least so it seemed at the time he was so sick—yet with many tears and intercessions we prayed him back and God gave him something like Hezekiah's extra portion of life. We ought to be very thankful for that. In those 15 years, how much has he done? Rather, how much has God done by him for us all? Therefore we will not sorrow so as to complain, but we will sorrow only so as to submit. The Lord be with you evermore! Amen.